



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 27, 2011 – 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., Loveland Municipal Building, 500 E. 3rd St, Loveland, CO

The mission of the Larimer County Open Lands Program is to preserve and protect significant Open Space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and develop parks and trails for present and future generations. These open lands provide opportunities for leisure, human renewal and protection of our natural and cultural resources.

Present:

John Ericson	Town of Estes Park	Trudy Haines	At-large
Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission	Suzan Fritchel	At-large
Mary Banken	At-large	Peter Kast	At-large
Jeff Hindman	Town of Berthoud	Commissioner Tom Donnelly	
Mark DeGregorio	PAB liaison	Steve Vessey	At-large

Staff Present:

Gary Buffington	Director	Travis Rollins	Open Lands Operations Manager
Kerri Rollins	Open Lands Program Manager	Zac Wiebe	Natural Resource Technician
Meegan Flenniken	Resource Program Manager	Sue Burke	
Charlie Johnson	Land Agent		

Absent:

David Roy	City of Ft. Collins	Patricia Brennan	At-large
Hugh McKean	City of Loveland	Don Griffith	At-large

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm.

REGULAR MEETING

- Approval of the meeting minutes for November 10, 2010.

Trudy motioned to approve the November 10 minutes, Steve seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

- Review Agenda and enclosures

PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda.

INFORMATION:

- Thanks to Peter for a great holiday party!
- 2011 OLAB meeting dates, the meetings will continue to be at the Loveland Municipal Building until the Library reopens
- Three Bells I and II closed 12/29 with lots of hard work from Charlie and Jeffrey, as well as a significant landowner donation. A press tour, along with staff from Fort Collins and Larimer County, is being planned in better weather.
- Certification approval from DORA’s Division of Real Estate for Larimer County Natural Resources to hold conservation easements that claim state tax credits was received in December.
- Larimer County was granted up to \$120,000 by GOCO to complete a pilot project assessing youth, family and the outdoors. A “Request for Proposals” has been posted and an interview team hopes to interview potential candidates in February. The Board will see a full presentation in February or March. The money will fund a gap analysis of youth in the outdoors and results will be used statewide.



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- Artist of the Year Program needs one Board member for application reviews and a meeting in March. 5th year. All the information is on the website and some applications have already been received. The committee consists of a member of OLAB, PAB, a staff liaison, the previous year's artist and another objective citizen. Meegan asked for a volunteer. Suzan volunteered to be a part of the committee.
- City and Town open space sales tax expenditure summaries – do you want them for 2010? Kerri reminded the Board that they wanted a presentation from each municipality and asked if this is still a desire of the Board. Another option is a written report. Trudy suggested hearing reports every few years. She also suggested that, due to the positive feedback from the joint meeting, the department should host a networking event each year for municipalities to share ideas. The Board agreed that this is a good idea. Peter would like a written report each year. Trudy pointed out that the larger towns have annual reports.
- The Poudre Runs Through It: Northern Colorado's Water Future; Thursday, February 3 from 5:00 - 8:00 pm; Hearing Room of the Larimer County Courthouse Office Building (first floor). Join University Connections, Colorado State University and the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado in creating a shared understanding -- a better informed and engaged community -- regarding the complex topic of water in Northern Colorado.
- After nearly two years, the observation pier at Fossil Creek Regional Open Space has been reopened to visitors. The pier foundation has been redesigned and rebuilt. Travis reminded the board about the destruction of the original pier. Most of the original materials were used. It reopened this January.
- There will be more regular reports on Hermit Park Open Space (HPOS) from Travis since Chris can't come to every meeting.
- Seasonal Closure of HPOS went into effect Dec. 21st. Minimal push back, primarily from neighbors who like to access the park for parking during inclement weather as well as for general recreational purposes. Are allowing people to walk into the park, but not to drive- gates have been installed and are currently closed. Has been a very good thing for wildlife- elk are using the park in force and Josh has seen mountain lion tracks.
- The unseasonably warm weather allowed the maintenance crew to really attack the pine beetle trees that seemed to explode all over HPOS this past year.
- The Elkhorn cabin replacement at HPOS is going well. A local Estes Park cabin building company won the bid and has been making good progress on the rebuild. The old cabin has been demoed and the new cabin should be completed by mid Jan. A truck ran through the cabin after a group event, port-a-let removal.
- All 5 of the new single stall vault toilets have finally been installed at 5 of the cabins at HPOS.
- GOCO grant submitted for the renovation of "Hermit's Hollow" (Campground #1) at HPOS was successful for \$200,000. It is looking like work will begin mid September of 2011. Although DNR will be generally following EDAW's design concept formed in the master plan (attached), there will be some adjustments- i.e. no shower house and some different road alignments. Focus will be on road improvements and a key feature of this particular campground will be catering to tent campers. Campsites will go from 29 existing sites to a max of 42- the majority of the new sites will be "walk in" tent camping. The board will be briefed once the new concepts are more concrete.
- Park Managers Chris Fleming and Mark Caughlan are working on revamping fee structures for special events, particularly weddings at HPOS and other popular venues. The process will be streamlined to make it a simpler group use reservation with a flat fee. Fees would go from approximately \$1200 for a wedding to \$500. Managers will be working with administrative staff to look at more effective ways to market these



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venues. Suzan asked why the fee for weddings was reduced. Gary answered that there has been a lack of exposure. Steve asked if wedding attendees are all required to pay a day use fee. Gary answered that DNR usually works with groups to include those fees into the wedding package costs.

- Report from the OLAB liaison to the Parks Advisory Board (PAB) – Trudy
Mark DeGregorio, a member of the PAB, reported that one of the major issues they are dealing with is parcels in the Big Thompson canyon. Gary commented that the Carter Lake marina contract has been awarded and that the Big Thompson fishing access project has been a highly publicized topic. Trudy clarified that there is a timeline for 2011. It addressed a lot of concerns from the Loveland Fishing Club and the Friends of the Big Thompson Canyon group. Concerns are mostly fishing related and there have been a few concerns from neighbors. Charlie will bring three priority areas to the PAB in February. That will be the first step before working with landowners to sell parcels.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager – Travis
 - All agriculture and grazing leases have been updated for the six properties that have leases. Travis will report on them next month. The two rental property leases, one each at RMOS and HTMOS, have been extended. At RMOS, rangers do patrol a neighboring property, that agreement has also been updated.
 - There was a plane crash near Chimney Hollow Open Space, Rangers were very involved.
 - River Bluffs Open Space opened in December and has been very busy. The Poudre river trail has been extended and has seen lots of use. That section ties into 22 miles of regional trail. Kerri commented that it was a soft opening and a grand opening will take place when the weather gets nicer, probably in April.
 - At RMOS there is another possible mining claim for gold. Charlie was contacted by an “amateur prospector”. Travis will keep the Board updated.
 - A few Rangers recertified their Wilderness First Responder and also participated in a land navigation class, working with GPS, compass, maps, etc.
- Natural Resource Events for February. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>

PRESENTATIONS:

- Volunteer appreciation for Joe Trofka and Ted Sams, lead volunteers for the Firewood Program – Charlie G
Charlie gave a brief overview of the firewood program and introduced Joe and Ted. The program is about 10 years old and was introduced by Mark and Meegan, initially to control pine beetles but also to benefit the public. CJ Cullins had an idea to incorporate volunteers instead of using rangers. It’s a difficult job and Joe and Ted kept all the volunteers safe. Every Saturday and Sunday Joe and Ted would meet volunteers and organize the day. The complexity and the amount of work is impressive. Charlie gave some statistics about this year’s program. Sixty-one families, 757 total volunteer hours, and 135 truckloads of wood have produced dramatic results. Joe and Ted put in 83 hours. Charlie read some volunteer quotes, excerpts from emails over the years, then presented Joe and Ted with a photograph and plaque commemorating their service.

ACTION:

- 2011 Small Grants for Community Partnering Recommendations – Sue
This year there were 16 applications, 13 will be funded at least partially. Sue thanked the committee, Trudy, Don and David. Sue gave a slideshow and description of each project and recommendation. See handout. Mary asked about the projects that were not eligible for funding. Sue explained that two of them were from an applicant whose match was his property taxes and the project was to fund no trespassing signs. The other project was to mulch around trees and included no volunteer time and no match. Steve asked about the Vista Bonita project, a private lake that is only open to the homeowner’s association (HOA). He wondered if it was



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appropriate to give the project money. Trudy commented that some of these HOAs are demonstrating good stewardship of their land and they will be good allies for the tax extension. Kerri reminded the Board that this program was created for outreach. While a lot of land has been protected, this was a way to reach out to smaller groups. Trudy added that she's been impressed by some HOAs ability to bring in very qualified volunteers. Kerri recalled a story from the past when a Larimer County employee who was an opponent of the Open Lands program changed their opinion based on a funded project in his HOA. Trudy commented on the opportunity to educate citizens through the process. **Steve motioned that the Board approve the recommendation, Mary seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) hunting report and update – Travis Rollins
For the first season there were seven available tags and DNR had 338 applicants with very little marketing. About \$3380 was generated from application fees. A survey of the hunters that drew tags was conducted and yielded very positive responses. The application process will be entirely online this year. Tom asked if applicants can apply for all tag categories. Travis answered that they can put in for up to 3 tags but each are individual applications. Peter asked if RMOS is closed during the hunting season. Hunting is limited to weekdays only. There were no negative interactions with visitors. There was a tremendous response from the sportsman's community, DNR gained goodwill with that community. Travis predicts that the number of applicants will double this year. Tom asked about the process of buying a tag. Travis answered that applicants are selected before the state process. RMOS is the only public land in game management unit (GMU) 9. Meegan commented that the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) more or less guarantees the unit for hunters who draw a tag from DNR. For 2011, CDOW would like to harvest more deer due to the presence of Chronic Wasting Disease. They recommend increasing deer tags from 2 to 4. Travis would also like to increase success for the elk hunters by adding the 4th season as an option, in addition to the currently available 2nd and 3rd combined seasons. Elk disperse off private properties later in the year and adding this season may help success rates. Peter wondered if DNR could offer more than nine tags. Travis answered that perhaps eventually but would like to take small steps. The decision is also influenced heavily by CDOW recommendations. Gary commented that the quality of the hunt that comes from not seeing other people is part of the experience. Peter also asked about allowing camping. Travis answered that, based on other visitors, at this time he'd like to keep hunting compatible with other allowed uses. He doesn't feel comfortable making special changes for one user group. Nancy clarified that it was allowed to use a horse to extract a kill. The board agreed to Travis' recommendations regarding tag limits and adding the season. A press release will be sent right away and the process will begin soon.

- Larimer County Natural Resources Master Plan, continued discussion
Kerri handed out the Trust for Public Land presentation. She has had more meetings and discussions with Loveland and Ft. Collins since the presentation. See handout. They have talked about doing a "greenprint" on a more regional level. It's a study now instead of a regional master plan. Then cities can do with the information what they will. DNR would like to use the information to create a master plan. There is a GOCO planning cycle in the spring and fall and DNR is considering applying for the August cycle. Kerri asked for thoughts and feedback. She commented also on the economic component of the study. There is a growing trend of local governments needing to justify themselves. The cost is estimated to be about \$20k to match the Doris Duke foundation grant from the partners. Nancy asked if they have analyzed the impacts of the passage of taxes. Kerri hasn't asked that specifically but added that feedback indicates it has "opened some doors". Trudy asked if that study is public. She thinks from a tax standpoint it would be very beneficial. Trudy also mentioned the "terminology" study. Kerri commented that there are existing studies that DNR could extrapolate from. Peter commented that it will take some time to get everyone on board to settle on a direction. He also added that this



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process can piggyback on the pilot project and possibly use a lot of the information from that project. Using that information will make the study cheaper and better. Trudy commented that anything DNR can do to partner with other agencies is beneficial.

- The Open Lands Program is celebrating its 15th anniversary and events will follow.

- Larimer County Natural Resources Recreation Map project overview – Zac Wiebe

Zac gave a brief overview of the map project, showed the Board the current version and solicited feedback. The Board discussed the option of showing conservation easements on the map and decided that, given the focus on recreation, they should not be shown.

- CDOT request for a permanent drainage easement purchase at Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space for the 392/I-25 interchange

Charlie explained the easement process; it will first be presented to OLAB then to the BOCC. He handed out a map showing the proposed easement. It will be a temporary wetland impact. CDOT will pull out the wetland, add rip rap, and put the wetland back. It should rehabilitate in a few years. The value is \$818. He has been working with Meegan, the city and CDOT. Nancy asked if the corner that DNR doesn't own is slated for development. Charlie answered that the interchange will take up most of that land. Trudy wondered if it will affect our open space. Charlie will inquire. Nancy wondered if they would trade land. Jeff pointed out that there is no vehicle access to the remnant property so development is unlikely.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- Update: Natural Resources Capital Development and Acquisition Summary 2009 - 2011.

Gary mentioned that there will be more updates to talk about at the February meeting.

- Revenue summaries for 2010 open space operations

Travis commented on the revenue sheet. See handout. He attempted to break out figures from Horsetooth Mountain Open Space from Horsetooth Reservoir Park. The figures do not include annual permits. Gary asked about the expenses. The operating budget was \$147,815k in 2010, approximately \$382,000 once staff is included. Gary commented that the figure is pretty good. It's one of the best ratios at 75%. Many of our areas are in the 40s%. Travis does these reports every 3rd year by using different formulas. Nancy clarified the numbers with staffing. Gary commented that the more revenue, the less tax money that has to be spent. Trudy asked if anyone complains about the fees. Kerri commented that no one complained when the Blue Sky trailhead opened and charged a fee. Travis commented that he is always looking for other ways to generate revenue.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Items not on the agenda

Gary commented on the top ten events in the DNR department. See handout. The DNR staff is very productive.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: (24-6-402(4)(a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest. **Nancy motioned to move into Executive Session, Steve seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

Nancy motioned to adjourn, Trudy seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:31.

Next regular meeting: Thursday, January 27, 2011; Loveland Council Chambers, 500 E. Third St., Loveland